



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 2, Issue 4

February 2012

A Message from Secretary Tom Vilsack

President Obama has issued a [Presidential Memorandum](#) directing the Federal government to take decisive steps to dramatically increase the purchase of biobased products over the next two years. This will create jobs and drive innovation in rural America where many biobased products are grown and manufactured.

The Memorandum will also result in a 50 percent increase in the number of new products that are designated as biobased. Biobased products include items like paints, soaps and detergents and are developed from farm grown plants, rather than chemicals or petroleum bases.

The biobased products sector marries the two most important economic engines for rural America: agriculture and manufacturing.

The purpose of the USDA BioPreferred® program is to promote the increased purchase and use of [biobased products](#). The program is expected to promote economic

development, creating new jobs and providing new markets for farm commodities.

To the extent that the BioPreferred program achieves its purpose, the increased purchase of biobased products will also be expected to reduce petroleum consumption, increase the use of renewable resources, better manage the carbon cycle, and may contribute to reducing adverse environmental and health impacts.

The USDA BioPreferred program has two major initiatives:

There is incredible potential for this industry to grow, innovate and create economic opportunity. One year ago, we created a biobased product label that will soon be featured on more than 500 products you can buy at a local grocery store or pharmacy. And as the federal government continues to encourage the use of these competitively-



priced bioproducts over alternatives made from oil, it will mean more contracts for American businesses, and more American manufacturers creating good jobs.

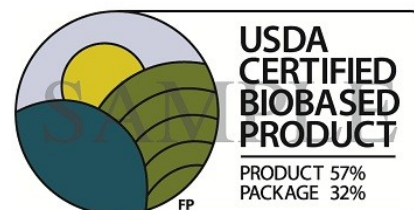
If you want to keep up with the latest information on BioPreferred products, sign up to [receive the newsletter](#). And stay on the lookout for the USDA Certified Biobased Label that will be showing up on more than a thousand different products. You can contact the staff of My USDA via email at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

Thomas J. Vilsack

Have you seen the USDA Certified Biobased Label?

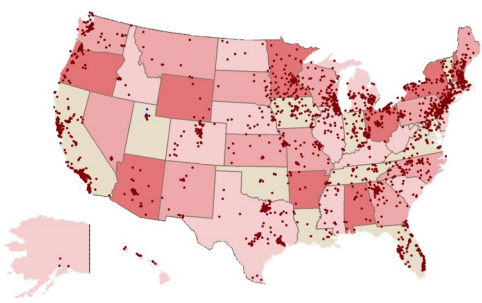
BioPreferred Deputy Program Manager Kate Lewis gives a thumbs-up after finding the USDA Certified Biobased Label on Washington, D.C. area supermarket shelves. Have you seen the label on another product?

Let us know where and [send us a pic!](#)



USDA Highlights BioPreferred® Program

There are numerous successful uses for biobased products, and they may include several products you haven't ever considered as potentially biobased. They include absorbents, carpets, cleaners, fertilizers, foodware, inks, lubricants, gun oil, paint strippers, and a host of others. Go to <http://www.biopreferred.gov/SuccessStories.aspx> to learn more about biobased product success stories.



ABOVE: United States map of biobased companies. [Click on the image](#) to search among more than 3,000 biobased companies in the US that either manufacture or distribute biobased products.



RIGHT: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration Robin Heard presents the USDA BioPreferred Consumer Label to Assistant Secretary of Labor Kathy Martinez, OPM Director John Berry, and Kathryn Medina, OPM Executive Director, Chief Human Capital Officers Council.

If you'd like to share your experience with biobased products, please contact us at usdabioinfo@iastate.edu.

USDA To Participate in the Rural Jobs Accelerator

The President has announced that USDA will be among several government and economic development organizations contributing to the Rural Jobs Accelerator, a national competition that will provide about \$15 million for projects that promote innovation-fueled regional job creation. USDA will utilize the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) program to help coordinate technical assistance and grant/loan programs so that potential rural customers have a single access point within the Federal Government to mobilize its resources to help a region of the country.

"President Obama understands that a strong American economy is tied to a healthy, vibrant rural economy," said **Secretary Tom Vilsack**, who chairs the White House Rural Council. "The actions we are taking will bring new economic investments to our rural communities to ensure the people who live in these towns have a better, brighter future."

Over the last month, the Obama Administration has made several additional announcements resulting from the White House Rural Council's efforts, including an initiative to help rural homeowners refinance their mortgages at lower interest rates and a new forest restoration framework to drive economic growth and job creation through timber restoration and harvest. The new plan would place Federal agencies on a path toward increasing federal timber harvests to 3 billion board feet. ([From USDA News Release 0063.12](#))

USDA Disability Employment Program



If you have any questions or have best practices to share, please contact Alison Levy, USDA Disability Employment Program Manager: Alison.Levy@dm.usda.gov. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

This summer, USDA is projected to hire approximately 7,100 student interns across the United States. Secretary Vilsack has set some strong goals to ensure that our student interns include individuals with targeted disabilities.

Of the 7,100 student positions, 3% will be filled with students who have targeted, or severe disabilities. As a result, USDA's goal is to hire 213 student interns with targeted or severe disabilities during the months of April

USDA Sets Goal to Hire 213 Student Interns with Targeted Disabilities. Free Federal Workforce Recruitment Program is Excellent Recruitment Source

through August this year. This goal will be monitored through weekly reports from each USDA agency and office to the Assistant Secretary for Administration, Mr. Pearlie Reed, and communicated to Secretary Tom Vilsack. The Workforce Recruitment Program will be the key to achieving this success.

Workforce Recruitment Program

Hiring an intern through the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) can provide a pipeline for bringing people with disabilities into the Federal workforce, both today and for years to come. Coordinated by the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the US. Department of Defense's Office of Diversity Management & Equal Opportunity, the WRP connects Federal managers to qualified, pre-screened college students and recent graduates with disabilities.

What Does the Program Offer Employers?

- Over 2,600 job candidates pre-screened through face-to-face interviews
- Information about each applicant's qualifications
- Ability to search for candidates tailored to specific job requirements

- Access to candidates across the nation from over 270 colleges and universities
- Flexibility in hiring for summer internships or permanent positions
- Opportunity to evaluate summer interns for permanent staffing needs
- Freedom to conduct independent interviews after referrals are made
- Ability to identify self-reported Veterans and Schedule A eligible candidates

What Can WRP Employees Do for You?

- Assign special projects that have been postponed for lack of time or resources
- Gain assistance for permanent staff with key projects
- Share specialized knowledge and innovative technical skills
- Help fill responsibilities of staff on vacation or leave of absence
- Prove that qualified people with disabilities make excellent employees
- Contribute in a wide variety of areas, including business, communications, engineering, science, computer science, and administrative support

How Does the Program Work?

Trained recruiters from Federal agencies conduct personal interviews with interested candidates on college and university campuses. Candidate information is compiled in a database that is available directly to all Federal agencies.

Interested managers and Human Resources Specialists can visit www.wrp.gov to request a password and obtain access to hire the best and brightest while diversifying our USDA workforce.

New Feature in 2012

This year, WRP allows Federal managers the opportunity to post internship opportunities for which students may apply. Let Campus Coordinators know about new job opportunities by filling out an online questionnaire at: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/wrp/form.htm>.

Students hired through the WRP receive reasonable accommodation support from the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP). For more information, please visit: <http://cap.mil/Programs/Employment/WRP.aspx>.



Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry addresses the Workforce Recruitment Program's Winter 2012 Event, hosted by USDA in February in the Jefferson Auditorium: Washington, D.C. USDA Photo by Lance Cheung.

USDA Virtual University Hosts First Flash Mentoring Event

In response to employee feedback gained through the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, the Virtual University (VU) hosted its first Flash Mentoring event. The event provided an opportunity for participants to hear leadership's expectations regarding mentoring at USDA, receive sound guidance on achieving Cultural Transformation goals, and meet prospective mentees and mentors in an effort to develop a formal relationship that further assists with career progression and the achievement of organizational goals.

The Virtual University piloted this event to gain artifacts and lessons learned with the intent of developing a train-the-trainer course (webinar) designed to aid all USDA agencies in organiz-

ing and executing similar events. Topics covered included:

- Career Development (through Building and Utilizing Solid Individual Development Programs)
- Working within Declining Budgets
- Work/Life Balance
- Change Management
- Employee Empowerment
- Rewarding Creativity and Innovation
- Communication Up and Down the Organizational Ladder
- Customer Service



One of the mentors at the event, Jacki Ponti-Lazaruk, stated, "I have mentored a number of folks over the years, but limited resources and increasing workloads have made it difficult to dedicate time to mentor others. The flash mentoring event gave me an opportunity to do something I love within my limited time available."

In piloting this event, the Virtual University only targeted Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area employees. This was not done in the vein of exclusivity, but done to provide VU Training and Employee Development Specialists with an opportunity to provide other agencies with exemplary training policies and products.

The VU looks forward to assisting all program coordinators with developing and executing quality mentoring programs through the use of the artifacts gained at this event.

The Virtual University would like to thank Karen Simpson from the Office of Personnel Management for all of her assistance in planning this event.

For questions regarding the USDA

Mentoring Departmental Regulation and organizing Flash Mentoring events, please contact Roderick Mance, via email, at

Roderick.Mance@dm.usda.gov.



TELEWORK AT USDA

Join the Movement

TELEWORK WEEK
MARCH 5-9, 2012



Pledge to Telework During
Telework Week 2012

PLEDGE NOW >>

Telework
EXCHANGE

USDA

USDA has pledged as a Telework Champion in the 2012 National Telework Week, March 5th through 9th. Telework Week is a national effort to encourage any and all to get off the road, spare their wallets, and telework.

Telework-eligible employees can pledge to participate in this effort for as many days as they can, even up to the full week. Even if you already have an approved agreement in place and plan to tele-

work at some point during this week already, you are encouraged to sign up and take the pledge.

By pledging to telework, employees will receive a cost savings estimate based on the number of days they agree to

By Mika J. Cross, USDA Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager

participate. Telework Week can also allow those who may not have had a chance to participate until now, the opportunity to test out the program.

According to the pledge data thus far, the average USDA telework pledge will save an average of **\$147** per employee, during Telework Week by not commuting. This translates to more than **\$7,000** a year per teleworker in commuting savings alone.

The benefits, however, do not stop at the commuter savings. USDA is focused on providing a high-quality work environment for our employees and serving the public in the best way possible. Telework really hits the mark.

USDA is proud to support telework. Join us in celebrating Telework Week from March 5-9. And be sure to read more about USDA's telework progress on pages 6 and 7 of this issue of MyUSDA!

Pledge today to telework at <http://www.teleworkexchange.com/teleworkweek>

You can also access the pledge page from the USDA Employee section available on the USDA.gov homepage: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navtype=AU&navid=USDA_EMPLOYEE



A TELEWORK SUCCESS STORY FROM THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

When I took my position with the USDA Forest Service several years ago, I knew it was going to be a challenge to deal with the new commute. I live over 40 miles from my duty station, and my regular commute time is over an hour each way.

The section of interstate I needed to take is known for bad accidents, partially due to the heavy tractor-trailer traffic it sees daily. When I worked out a telework agreement with my supervisors, I was thrilled to have the chance to cut out the stressful commute one day a week.

In addition, I have shifted to scheduling my doctor appointments, for both myself and my children, to my telework days. I really enjoy my job. Now telework is helping me balance my personal /family needs with the demands of my job and increasing my overall job satisfaction.

Angela Parrish
USDA Forest Service
George Washington & Jefferson NF
Roanoke, VA

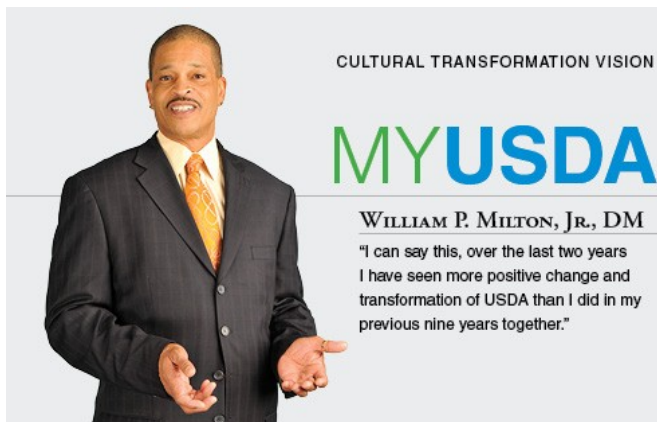


Angela Parrish
Civil Engineer

Do you have a Telework Success Story?
Send it to telework@dm.usda.gov

Talking Telework with USDA's Telework Management Officer (TMO) William P. Milton, Jr.

February marks the second month of USDA's "Turbo-Charge" Telework campaign, geared to push participation in telework across the Department to its highest level yet. As USDA prepares for National Telework Week, March 5-9, 2012, the staff of MyUSDA had a chance to chat with Mr. William P. Milton, Jr. about his vision for USDA's Telework Program in 2012 and why his commitment to a successful program is so strong.



Q. Why such an emphasis on Telework at USDA?

What would you say is the key driver(s)? Why now?

A. Telework is essential today to recruit and retain a talented workforce and to provide critical work/life balance necessary to address, among other things, loss in productivity due to time away from work for medical appointments, dependent care issues and other commitments our employees have to their communities and families.

Telework is also a critical component of continuity of operations to ensure that essential USDA functions continue during emergency situations. In a recent report issued by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), they found that 86% of employees who Telework indicated that Teleworking had a positive impact on their satisfaction with their job and their employing organization. Further, the report found that 81% of

these employees indicated that their Telework experience had a positive impact on their desire to stay in the organization.

Q. What's your message to USDA Leadership, Managers, and Supervisors who may be a bit reluctant to pushing widespread Telework for their Agency or Office?

A. There is an absence of any published studies, surveys or research that dispute the benefits of Teleworking. Those benefits include increased productivity, reductions in leave usage and absenteeism, and higher levels of employee job satisfaction and engagement. Telework also offers a number of important environmental benefits, such as reducing the level of dangerous vehicular emissions and pollutants, while easing traffic congestion.

Q. Tell us about your commitment for USDA's involvement in Telework Week? How do you think it will help those who may not have experienced teleworking before or who have not teleworked frequently?

A. As USDA's TMO, I fully support the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 and submit that it is paramount that all eligible employees be allowed to Telework to the maximum extent possible without arbitrary barriers. In the alternative, USDA will be hindered in our Transformation efforts that include recruiting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce necessary to meet today's challenges and the challenges of the future.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to share with the USDA workforce?

A. I acknowledge that USDA has made tremendous progress in increasing the number of employees who are regularly Teleworking. The levels of participation today in contrast to those who participated in 2009 are much, much higher. However, if we are to truly become a modern workplace with a modern workforce, our efforts to increase Telework participation across the Department need to be even more aggressive, especially if we are to meet our fiscal year goal of reaching 45% of all eligible employees participating in ore Telework.

For more information about USDA's Telework Program, join the Work/Life and Wellness community on [USDA Connections](#).

What Congress is saying about USDA's Telework Program

Congressmen Gerry E. Connolly (D - VA-11) and John Sarbanes (D - MD-03), active proponents for the *Telework Enhancement Act of 2010*, recently leveraged the Congressional Research Service to survey Federal agencies about telework implementation plans and progress. The survey findings showed that while some agencies are making great progress in implementing telework programs, other agencies are slower to adopt telework programs. The USDA, USPTO, and GSA were noted for progress in successfully integrating telework into daily operations to meet the goals of the *Telework Enhancement Act*. [All survey results were shared with John Berry](#), Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Stay Tuned for “Let’s Talk Telework!” March Edition

Hundreds of employees have joined the recent “Let’s Talk Telework!” monthly webinar series in January and February. These webinars are scheduled for the last Thursday of each month from 12:30-1:30 EST. Topics include addressing common challenges and barriers to telework, and general best practices for both the Teleworker and supervisors of Teleworkers at USDA.

Participants can submit topic suggestions and follow up with questions and answers following each session. Archived slides, handouts and audio files of the previous month’s webinar can be found on the Work/Life and Wellness community page on [USDA Connections](#). You can also send an email to telework@dm.usda.gov.

The March edition of “Let’s Talk Telework!” will feature a panel of supervisors from a variety of agencies across the Department who have embraced and fully implemented Telework. Other supervisors and managers can join in on this session to learn from them how they have fostered flexibility, accountability, and realized a number of important benefits for their workgroups and the mission they lead.

Join us on Thursday, March 29, 2012, from 12:30-1:30 p.m. EST for this engaging session. Participants can either view as an individual or as a group; however, we strongly encourage joining as a group as there are only 300 phone lines available for the live event. Be sure to register in AgLearn for more information! If you have any questions about the webinar content, please contact the Work/Life and Wellness Team at worklife@dm.usda.gov. Questions or technical difficulty with the registration process should be forwarded to your agency’s [AgLearn point of contact](#).

A Telework Success Story from the Food Safety and Inspection Service

Being allowed to telework changed my entire work attitude. I became more efficient, less tired (gain of 2 hours to sleep or do other things), more energized to do the work; happier to be trusted with the privilege to telework; more interested in my work; less time spent 'dressing' for work: get up, eat, work; not having to fix and pack a lunch every day. I am sure I put more hours into actual work while teleworking than in the office. I finish projects, instead of stopping and dashing for the train. I can spread out and organize my work. I can dress comfortably. It is easier to get tea/coffee and use facilities. Everything is easier, faster, and more efficient. The feeling of being 'in charge' of one's work has been proven to increase one's job satisfaction and productivity. My job rarely requires my presence in the Office. Teleworking is perfect for me.



Judith B. Harvey, V.M.D., District Veterinary Medical Specialist, FSIS, Philadelphia

Nursing Mothers Program 2012 Participation Survey **Open through March 9, 2012**

The Federal Government is challenged to remain at the forefront of setting the pace to change the culture of the American workplace. USDA is committed to providing a workplace that supports its diverse workforce and fosters a supportive environment that allows its employees to balance their commitment to work, family, and community.

USDA has organized a Nursing Mothers Program Work Group to determine whether it is currently meeting the needs of its new and expectant mothers who wish to continue lactation after they return to the office. This Department led effort will work to determine the current state of the USDA Nursing Mothers Program and whether improvements can be made.

Below is a link to a survey designed to be taken by new and expectant mothers who may now or who plan to participate in the Nursing Mothers Program. The survey is available through March 9, 2012, and should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Please help the Nursing Mothers Program Work Group by providing your feedback.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WP95G8K>

If you have additional questions regarding this survey, the USDA Nursing Mothers Program or other Work/Life and Wellness Programs, please send a message to worklife@dm.usda.gov. (Please note: Bargaining Unit Employees participation in this survey is strictly voluntary.)

USDA Helping Remote Alaskan Villages Obtain Broadband Connectivity

Rural Development in Alaska is making history by connecting the inaccessible, remote and rural areas of Alaska's indigenous people for the first time with the rest of the world.



**By Larry Yerich, USDA-RD
Alaska Public Information
Coordinator**

Alaska Governor Sean Parnell hosted the first live terrestrial videoconference between Juneau and Bethel's Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC), which administers a comprehensive health care delivery system for more than 50 rural communities in Southwest Alaska. The videoconference utilized TERRA-Southwest which now provides terrestrial broadband service for the first time from Anchorage to 65 remote, rural communities in Bristol Bay and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

On the face of it, the news may not elicit much sensation, but let's look at some facts. The YKHC and those many inaccessible villages are located in the YK Delta, one of the largest river deltas in the world, and at 75,000 square miles it's roughly the size of Oregon.

Most folks can't conceive of going a day without being able to connect, but

USDA-RD Alaska State Director Jim Nordlund looks on with Tina Pidgen, GCI Senior Vice President for Government Affairs and Martin Cary, GCI Vice President for Managed Broadband as Alaska Governor Sean Parnell makes historical connection with Gene Peltola, CEO and president of Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation in Bethel. *Photo courtesy of GCI*

the residents of Southwest Alaska have been unable to seamlessly connect (or connect at all) by broadband technology with anyone until now.

The total American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for TERRA-SW is \$88 million, a combination of a \$44 million loan and a \$44 million grant through the USDA-RD's Rural Utilities Service to GCI's wholly owned subsidiary, United Utilities, Inc.

AMS Fosters Blossoming Partnership with Public School

By: Stefanie Watson

Not much grows in Washington, DC, in mid-winter, but the Agricultural Marketing Service's partnership with Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC) is in full bloom!

Columbia Heights is a public school in the District that offers 6th to 12th graders special educational programs such as language immersion, science and technology, business, finance, bilingual education, and advanced placement.

In late January, eight AMS volunteers kicked off the new year by mentoring

young CHEC students and evaluating seniors' math and science portfolios, which showcase the students' learning progression in specific areas.

These activities are only part of our growing relationship with CHEC. In February, AMS took part in the school's Career Day.

Last year, our dedicated volunteers actively supported various CHEC outreach events, including the school's Job Shadowing Day.

We also host "learning excursions" to USDA for students and their teachers. During these visits, we teach students about AMS and USDA efforts that directly affect them like Let's Move!, My Plate, and Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food.

This spring, AMS and CHEC will literally be growing together as we team up to bring agriculture to the classroom by helping CHEC's Green Team create their very first People's Garden!

Now that's a blossoming relationship!

Agriculture Marketing Service: Changing Our Communications Culture

By Christopher Purdy

The Agricultural Marketing Services Fruit and Vegetable Program has served farmers and others selling and buying fresh and processed fruits and vegetables since the early 1900s. Every day, you can find us in our customers' fields, packing sheds, and production facilities, and in terminal markets across the nation. We sure know our customers very well. But, do they know us well? During a series of outreach visits, our customers told us we are "one of the best kept secrets in the produce industry" and many are not aware of our various programs.

Secretary Vilsack challenges us to reach out to our stakeholders, including the flourishing Native-American, African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities. To meet the Secretary's challenge and increase our customers' knowledge about our programs, we had to change our culture. We decided to move from a culture that requires the public to come to us for information to a proactive culture that reaches out to them. So, we began to build a toolbox full of outreach solutions that use cost-effective contemporary communications technology and social media to reach customers and markets.

- We built a database of tens of thousands of produce industry members, community and faith-based organiza-

tions, industry associations, governments and more. Now we can reach customers with the click of a mouse.

- We began offering an ongoing webinar series on how to use AMS' services to grow businesses for small and medium-sized growers. More than 2,000 individuals have participated in our webinars since 2010.



- We started blogging, tweeting, and using Facebook to reach our customers.

- We send a new periodic newsletter to more than 10,000 stakeholders. It introduces staff and service offerings, discusses timely issues that impact the industry, and highlights the innovative ways we are responding to evolving industry needs. Another blah newsletter? No way! Recently, an industry leader told us, "Another great...

newsletter – tight, succinct, informative, non-government speak, involving folks throughout the organization (not just the top bosses)."

All of these tools have helped us better reach underserved markets. And, we will continue to add more tools to our toolbox and build on our exciting new communications culture. It's no secret that AMS is all about evolving to better serve our customers!

USDA Ethics Director Stuart Bender Honored with Patriot Award

In a recent ceremony, USDA's Director of the Office of Ethics Stuart Bender (second from right) was presented the Patriot Award, honoring his support of the United States National Guard Reserve.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration Robin Heard and Director of Human Resources Management (OHRM) Karen Messmore were on hand, and Mr. Lou Williams of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve gave a short speech of appreciation and presented the award.

Expressing their thanks in



uniform were Mr. Bender's Reserve subordinates: Captain Mike Edwards, Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy and Lieutenant Commander Lorraine ("Raine") Luciano, Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy. Mark Thomas, a member of the National Guard, who is employed by OHRM's Executive Resources Operations Division also attended.

The Patriot award is given annually, on behalf of the Department of Defense, to employers that provide superior support to Reservists and members of the National Guard.

Michigan Forest Service Commemorates Black History Month

By Diane G. Gardin

The Forest Service in Michigan celebrated Black History Month in February. Guest speaker Dr. Eunice F. Foster, a professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at Michigan State University, highlighted numerous African American women who have contributed to American history and culture. Dr. Foster is a founding member of the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS), serving as MANRRS' first national president. She was joined (left to right) by Elva Rosenthal, RD; Troy Nichols, FSA; Al Norwood, NRCS; Dr. Eunice F. Foster (speaker); Reggie Magee, RD; Lucretia Steward, FS; Jean Porter, NASS; and Diane Gardin, FS.



February New Releases!

Jumpstart your learning with new courses! Below are just a few AgLearn resources available to you starting this month. And, as always, you can **add to your knowledge at no cost to you, 24/7!**

Personal Development Courses

[Developing Character for Decisiveness](#) [Overcoming the Barriers to Decisiveness](#)

[Writing under Pressure: Preparing for Success](#)

Leadership Curriculum

[Fundamentals of Organizational Learning](#) [Implementing and Assessing a Succession Planning Program](#)

Management Curriculum

[Essential Mentoring Techniques: Building and Maintaining Mentoring Relationships](#)

[Essential Mentoring Techniques: Evaluating and Ending the Mentoring Program](#)

For a complete list of new February AgLearn courses, [visit the AgLearn website.](#)

A History of Cultural Transformation in the US Forest Service

By Lincoln Bramwell,
Forest Service Historian

The U.S. Forest Service has a long and rich history of caring for over 193 million acres of forest and grasslands across the United States. Created in 1905 to protect the nation's forests and watersheds and provide the country a continuous supply of timber, the dominant resource concerns for much of the agency's history were timber, range, and fire management.



In order to achieve its mission, the Forest Service became a can-do agency that overcame distance, a variety of settings, and an ideology of decentralization. The agency achieved a high degree of unity through administrative procedures but mainly through a culture of voluntary conformity and a homogenous workforce. For example, in 1960, 90% of professional positions in the agency were held by foresters recruited from just 27 schools.

Beginning in 1960, a series of major cultural and policy changes fundamentally changed the Forest Service mission and the makeup of its workforce. The first of these changes occurred with the 1960 Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act which mandated the agency equally balance outdoor recreation, range, timber, watersheds, and fish and wildlife, as it managed the forests. The act broadened the scope of national forest management from a few resources to the protection and management of a series of biologically diverse areas.

The second major change reflected a shift in public attitudes about the environment. A new awareness about envi-

ronmental issues is exemplified by the popularity of Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*. Her book, along with the writing of many others including Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall, helped shift conservation from a movement concerned with managing resources for the future into a quality of life movement interested in improving environmental conditions today.

Congress passed a series of acts over the following decade that reflected this shift. The acts included the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Clean Air and Water Acts among others. These acts fundamentally changed the way the Forest Service managed the national forests. Collectively, input from the public, the courts, and Congress shifted the policy of the agency from sustainable management of a harvestable resource, to ecosystem management for a much wider constituency. The new laws expanded the content areas and processes of management. They also brought a variety of biological scientists and natural resource

planners into the agency in large numbers for the first time.

Along with different values and attitudes toward nature, the public espoused changes in the federal workforce. In 1961, President Kennedy created the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity to achieve a representative bureaucracy—meaning the federal workforce would reflect the demographics of the country. Since President Kennedy's action, Republican and Democratic presidents have passed a series of civil rights acts and executive orders affirming the importance of this goal. The resulting legislation has further broadened the responsibility of Forest Service leaders to create a representative workforce.

Since that time, the Forest Service has actively worked to achieve these goals. These efforts have come in fits and starts, with varying levels of success, but the agency is committed to fulfilling the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act which Congress passed to achieve full demographic representation in the Federal workforce.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell's commitment to achieve a cultural transformation is enshrined in the agency mission: "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." The Forest Service outlines 5 main activities to achieve this mission:

- Resource protection and management
- Research
- State and Private Forestry
- International Programs
- Achieving and supporting an effective workforce that reflects the full range of diversity of the American people.

UPCOMING SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

- **Women's History Month Observance, Thursday, March 8, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium**
- **Holocaust Remembrance Day, Wednesday, May 9, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium**
- **Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Observance, Thursday, May 24, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium**

Observances are scheduled to begin at 10:00 a. m. (EST)

IF YOU'RE IN DC, PLEASE ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR



Centralizing the USDA Student Employment Program

By Wenndy Carrasco, USDA Student Employment Program Manager

As we make strides toward increasing our hiring of minorities into the USDA Student Employment Program, it is important to learn and utilize the different internship and scholarship programs offered to your Mission areas. The Office of Human Resource Management created a "**one stop shop**" for students to apply to our internships programs; for our Mission Areas Student Employment Program Coordinators (SEPCs) and/or hiring managers to search for applicants for mission critical occupations; and for our recruiters to direct potential applications to the student portal applicant site, all in one place.

Through the "**Student Portal Admin site**," Mission Areas SEPCs and hiring managers have the ability to:

- Access to the student portal admin site
- Post their internship vacancy announcements
- Monitor their vacancy announcement to see who applied
- Search applications
- Select applications and apply qualification standards, veteran's preference etc, and
- Notify applicants when reviewing applications, and/or when applications are selected

[To get access to the student portal admin site, click this link](#), and follow the instructions. To post internship vacancy announcements, please contact your Mission Area SEPCs.

What are the procedures hiring manager and SEPCs must follow to process the paperwork when bringing interns after selection process?

The hiring manager **must submit** an SF-52 (E-52 for FNS), and attach a position description (PD) to their assigned Mission Area SEPC. The SEPC will post a vacancy announcement on the student portal or search student portal for applications.

Who are the key players for the Student Employment Program?

There are several individuals that are involved to ensure the procedures and all requirements are met.

Department Student Employment Program Manager (DSEPM) - responsible for overseeing the student employment program, working together with Mission Area SEPCs, hiring managers, Human Resources Specialist, and Recruiters. Establish and implement policies and procedures for the student employment program, develop and maintain the student portal sites and develop recruitment materials.

Hiring Managers - responsible for contacting and working together with my assigned Mission Area SEPC to search the database, obtain applications, make the selection, notify my SEPC and work with my assigned human resources representative to bring my interns on-board.

Student Employment Program Coordinator (SEPC) - responsible for contacting and working together with hiring managers and department SEP manager to search the student portal admin site, qualify applications, provide applications to hiring manager for review, provide guidance, work with the assigned human resources representative to process the student paperwork after selection is made.

Human Resources Specialist (HRS) - responsible for obtaining the required documentations from the SEPC and/or hiring manager, contacting the students to notify them of their internship selection, and processing any logistical information needed to bring students on-board such as location, supervisor's information, start date and end, etc.

Recruiter (R) - responsible for advising potential applicants to apply to internship opportunities, refer them to the student portal applicant site, notified SEPC and working together with hiring managers to ensure mission critical occupations are fill with diverse applicants.

For more information, please contact Wenndy Carrasco at 202-260-8335 or send an email to wenndy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov.

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is a locally funded initiative that provides District youth with enriching and constructive summer work experiences through subsidized placements in the government and private sectors for a period of six weeks. The purpose is to expose young people to various career fields and introduce them to the dynamics of working in a professional and positive work environment. Departmental Management will coordinate a centralized USDA-wide effort to provide interns aged 18 - 21 to **Metro DC area agencies only at no cost**. If you are able to volunteer as a host employer to provide young adults with structured job opportunities that will positively impact their futures, please contact please contact Michelle Jordan , Recruitment Program Manager – recruitment@dm.usda.gov for more information.

USDA Vows Greater Commitment to Hire Veterans and Transitioning Service Members

Secretary Vilsack and The American Legion National Commander Fang Wong have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which will help our Nation's veterans and transitioning military service members find positions that promote agriculture, animal and plant health, food safety, nutrition, conservation and rural communities.

With this partnership, USDA and the American Legion will leverage existing resources to expand opportunities for veterans while promoting USDA programs and services in communities throughout the country.

"At President Obama's direction, USDA and the rest of the federal government are working to make sure our veterans in rural areas receive the medi-

cal care, training and employment support they deserve," said Vilsack. "And that's why this partnership with the American Legion is so critical.

America's veterans are leaders across rural America and we want to help them pursue their dreams by prioritizing innovative new approaches, attracting capital and forming partnerships like this to continue economic development in rural communities."

Today, about 6.1 million veterans live in rural communities – a higher concentration than anywhere else in the country.

Over 5,300 American Legion posts are located in counties with populations under 40,000 and one-third of the Legion's membership call rural America home.

The American Legion has long been committed to helping transitioning military and America's veterans find jobs and through its vast networks, USDA will actively recruit veterans and transitioning military servicemen for employment while promoting greater awareness of USDA programs.

Specifically, USDA and the American Legion have agreed to promote USDA vacancy announcements; share information about activities in newsletters; provide information about USDA programs and vacancies through established networks as well as the on the Web; and promote veteran owned business participation in USDA contracts.



American Legion National Commander Fang Wong (left) and USDA Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack sign the Memorandum of Understanding at a ceremony held February 28, 2012.

MyUSDA Volume 2, Issue 4

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA](#)

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Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for March submissions is Thursday, March 22, 2012.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue.)

The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it.
Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov